



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Sept. 21, 2007

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North Dakota Observes Family Day – A Day To Eat Dinner With Your Children

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of Family Day 2007 on September 24, First Lady Mikey Hoeven and the North Dakota Department of Health and Department of Human Services are reminding families of the importance of eating dinner together.

Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with your Children™ is a national movement launched by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. The event encourages parents to eat dinner frequently with their kids and be involved in their children's lives. CASA's research shows that the more often kids eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs.

“Unfortunately, busy schedules are an issue for all families, and having such tight time constraints may cause family meals to fall by the wayside,” First Lady Mikey Hoeven said. “It’s important that families take the time to eat meals together. Whether you’re serving a home-cooked meal or ordering food from your favorite restaurant, what your kids really want at the dinner table is you.”

Family meals decline throughout adolescence. Students in middle school eat more meals with their families than do students in high school. According to the 2005 North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 70 percent of seventh- and eighth-grade students ate a meal with their families on a given day, compared to 57 percent of high school students.

The reasons adolescents are not having family meals may include conflicting parent and teen schedules for work, sports, extracurricular school activities or socializing with friends; children wanting and/or having more independence; poor family relations; and food preferences.

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“Mealtime is the best time and place for parents and caregivers to model healthy eating behaviors and food choices to their children,” said Katherine Black, Maternal and Child Health Nutrition Program coordinator for the Department of Health. “Mealtime is also a good time for family members to talk with each other, which may strengthen emotional bonds and relationships within the family. Children also can be involved in preparing meals, which promotes many lifelong skills and benefits, from developing fine motor skills in very young children to building self-esteem in all children.”

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